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THE

History of my Friend;

SHEWING

HOW HE WAS DEPRIVED OF HIS

MILITARY COMMISSION,

AND LEFT, (A CRIPPLE,) TO STARVE, IN TIME OF PEACE; MERELY BECAUSE A GREAT MAN THOUGHT MY FRIEND CALLED HIM A

Nincompoop!!!

BEING A TRUE HISTORY,

TAKEN FROM THE LIFE;

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE

President of the U. States.

"'TIS NO LIE."—Linkum Fs

NEW-YORK, 1816.

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The History of my Friend, &c.

May it please your Excellency,

I HAVE long had it in contemplation to address you, on a subject which is not only very interesting to your excellency and a particular friend of mine, but to all the world besides, and to all the people of the United States in particular. I have been compelled to postpone the address, until this time, for various reasons, (which reasons still exist, as the back and belly of my friend will attest,) such as my friend being thrown upon the world at the age of thirty-seven, or thereabouts, in a state of poverty, without any profession, excepting that of arms, and without health, for he lost his precious health in the service of his country; and this extremely interesting situation rendered it impossible for me, in behalf of my friend, to have put pen to paper until this moment.

It is a story worth your excellency's hearing, and worth the whole world's hearing.

Not but what there are many as good—perhaps better: but this being perfectly within my own knowledge, I cannot be mistaken in the facts—and, as I intend to dedicate this story to your excellency, I hope your excellency will take it to heart, and make the best possible use of it; such as reading it to your whole family—to the members of both houses of congress—to the honorable the board of officers, who made the selection for the military peace establishment, and, more especially, to all old women in pantaloons.

My friend, who hath as honest and as warm a heart as ever God warmed, was bred a farmer, among the green mountains of Vermont. In the latter part of his youth, which was about the year of our Lord Christ one thousand

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eight hundred and seven, when, as that excellent man Mr. Jefferson said, there was a "dark speck in the political horizon," and when the good people of these states thought that "speck," after brewing and fermenting a while, might burst forth into a terrible storm, my friend left his plough, and undertook to prepare himself for the worst. He thought it his duty; his country was insulted and threatened, and he declared, from that moment, that he would make himself master of the art of defending her, and of avenging her insults, not only for that time, but so long as God should give him power so to do.

What was to be done? He consulted his friends, who bore a conspicuous part in the revolutionary war—who had lived in the times that "tried mens' souls"—who were denominated "green mountain boys,"—who were a terror to evil doers throughout the states and the colonies, and who would not submit to any power that refused them justice—they persevered and obtained it, and I thank fortune that my friend is descended from such a noble stock. Not that a man is by nature any better for having a king, an emperor, duke, count, marquis, or lord for his father; (and by the bye, my friend thinks this generally militates against the descendant, inasmuch as those titles give to the possessors and their descendants, a "right divine," of being dishonest, and committing all sorts of fraud and violence with impunity, and without being thought the worse for it; and that, because it is done upon a *great scale*, and because as they are generally the *makers* and the *judges* of the law, they are not at all subject to it; besides the objection which arises, in these cases, of ascertaining the *true* stock from which these people descend!)—so that unless a man who is truly descended from a genuine stock, shall do honor to his country and himself, as well as to his progenitors, he is rather the worse for being of *noble* descent. I feel confident that your excellency will find, in perusing this faithful, but plain tale, that my friend is fully entitled to the appellation left him by his ancestors.

I say, after consulting his friends and receiving their ad-

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vice, (which coincided with his own sentiments) by the aid of their influence at head-quarters, he procured for himself a cadet's warrant, which entitled him to all the rights and privileges of the military school at West-Point. He forthwith repaired to that place, where he arrived on the seventeenth day of May, 1807; and such was his close application to study, and the exercise of arms, that he was enrolled the November following, at the war office, for promotion; and was accordingly promoted, the first vacancy, to a second lieutenancy in the regiment of artillerists. Although the army of the United States, at this time, was almost as much neglected and despised by the government, as if it had no connection or concern with it, yet did my friend continue to persevere in his studies and exercises, as much as if he had known positively that his skill must soon be put to the test. This is a SMALL circumstance, which would not be worth mentioning were it not that so many others, who have been preferred to him, neither felt nor acted as he did; it being the heighth of their ambition to mount a cockade upon their hats, and swagger through the streets of our cities, looking pretty, as hard as they could, at the ladies all the while. And here, if it did not lead me out of my direct course, I could name those of my friend's cotemporaries at West-Point, who have served their country most faithfully, such as Col. Post, Major Anderson, Majors Clark, Van De Venter, and Mason, with many others, whose names, let me tell your excellency, are worth, in a military point of view, a host of those of your excellency's more intimate acquaintances. How hath your excellency disposed of these gentlemen? The three first are left out of the army! the two last mentioned officers are retained it is true, but it seems only for the purpose of being insulted, by the late extraordinary mode of filling vacancies in the corps to which they belong! But, as I write this merely for my worthy friend, who is too much crippled to do it himself, and whose ilion and colon are (as he says and I believe) this moment writhing and twisting into knots for the want of a dinner, I must postpone the cases of others to a more convenient time.

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He served the first year with Major LLOYD BEAL, at Fort Wolcott, in the harbor of Newport, R. I. with what faithfulness the Major can attest. He was next placed at Fort Columbus, in the harbor of New-York, under the command of the then Major STODDART, since deceased, where he served four months; next under the command of Major READ, at Fort Mifflin, two months; then under Col. GEORGE ARMISTEAD, at Fort M'Henry, for two years; and if attention to the health, cleanliness, and discipline of troops be worth any thing, my friend merits much; for he did not leave the said fort but three times in the two years—once to dine with a friend of his, (the surgeon of the post, whose family resided in town,)—once to dine with CHRISTOPHER HUGHES, Esq. a famous brick maker of Baltimore, and a worthy man; and a third time to pay his respects to a very excellent young lady of his acquaintance, who was then on a visit to her friends in that city. But, as this kind of attention to garrison duty is not considered worth any thing at this day, I am requested to forbear to touch upon it here, as it will be considered hereafter, with the natural consequences of being steady and faithful.

In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and twelve, my friend was ordered to the city of Annapolis, where, if your excellency recollects, there is a fort bearing the name of "Madison," and another, that of Severn. These two forts are distant from each other about three-fourths of a mile, and separated by the river Severn. He had, during the darkest times of the war, only from 20 to 40 men, with which to defend the capital of Maryland!!! This was not his fault, for he did often require, of the proper authority, additional troops for the defence of Annapolis. WHY the enemy did not attack that city, is probably only known to himself. So confident were the inhabitants of the city of an attack, that they removed three several times their women, as well as their other valuable articles to the country in the rear: after the conflagration of Washington, and more especially after the enemy's failure at Baltimore, it was believed, that the latter disappointment

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would induce him to attempt the destruction of Annapolis. My friend was then confined to his room by a fever, (and had been so confined several days;) there were but few inhabitants in the city, and those few, with the Chancellor of the State, and Chief Judge at their head, as a committee, waited upon my friend, begging in the most urgent manner, that he would make no resistance in case the enemy should attempt to take possession of the city—"because," said they, "your force is so small that it were impossible to resist effectually—that a partial resistance would be the destruction of the city, whereas, no resistance being made, the enemy might be induced to leave the city standing." My friend replied, that though he had but forty men, and no officer besides himself, he should, if attacked, defend the place as long as he had men to fire a gun—that it was his duty so to do, and that he himself, although sick, had a chair prepared for the purpose to be carried into the battery in case of an attack. He had submitted to the general his plan of defence, which was approved. The above committee sent an express to the general commanding the district, (then at Baltimore,) to request that, with only the few troops then at Annapolis, no resistance should be made. The general replied, that he approved the plan of the commanding officer at that post, (which was my friend,) and it must be carried into execution. My friend knew his men were true and faithful, and wished for nothing more than a fair opportunity to distinguish themselves. There was not a moment for the two years which he commanded there, that they were not ready for action—nor an hour so dark, that each man could not have taken his station, and laid his hand upon every necessary implement instantly—nor is it believed, notwithstanding the few troops he had, that it were in the power of the enemy to have surprised him. But so great was his anxiety, not only for the honor of his country, but his own, (knowing well the responsible situation in which he was placed,) that he ventured out too soon after his fever had left him, and thereby took a severe cold, which settled in his legs, and finally deprived him

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entirely of the use of them for upwards of four months—in truth he was not able, even with crutches, to get out of his room for that length of time: it was a violent rheumatic affection, which, from present appearances, will last him as long as he lives. And since by his being left out of the army, after giving to his country eight of the best years of his life, himself and family being cut off instantly and unexpectedly from bread, left distant from their friends and relatives, himself unable to follow his former profession of farmer, because he had been too faithful to his country in the profession of arms, (a profession which he intended always to follow;) He has been induced to relate to your excellency the above facts, not in a whining, complaining manner, with a view of exciting your excellency's clemency, nor with any view of being reinstated! No! he hereby declares that he would beg from door to door, before he would serve an instant under the *present organisation* of the army. Here I could mention very many officers who are retained, who will serve no longer than they can look for, and find other employment. There are two classes of officers which will leave the army for different reasons; the first are those who entered merely for a commission, which would entitle them to wear an epaulette, military button and cockade, and which they intended to lay aside as the novelty of the thing had worn off a little; the second, and much the best class, are those who entered the army and studied their profession, intending to pursue it for life—but who feel themselves disgraced by having placed over their heads poor, little, beardless, white-faced boys, without education or experience; who were in their clouts, when these gentlemen were serving their country in the field, or perfecting themselves in their profession at the different garrisons. Why, sir, I have seen a General make choice of a man for his aid, who did not know the name, or utility, of one single implement made use of in battery; in truth, sir, when he visited the works placed in charge of my friend, (with a view of reporting to the General,) the tompions being in the guns, he absolutely examined both ends of them a long time, before he could tell

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which was the muzzle, or how the deuce the charge could get in!! And he went away without knowing whether the charge should be pricked in at the touch-hole, or rammed in at the muzzle. This gentleman *aid*, who was the general's stay and staff, had a platoon of ladies with him, to whom he undertook to explain the use of every thing he saw in the battery, which he had no sooner entered, than he exclaimed, (after giving the ladies one of the most knowing nods which your excellency ever saw, and throwing full upon them one of his most killing smiles, enough, at least, to have wounded them all in their gizzards,) "here ladies, only see these here monstrous great pistols! by king are they not big ones? Did you ever see sich things afore in your born days?". The ladies stood confounded and aghast—the aid went on, and taking up a rammer and giving a second serious grin, called to the ladies to take notice "*how very curiously* it was made, with twizzly wool wound round one end of it," which he was pleased to say, was "*a swabber.*" It was at this time, my friend says, when the said aid, with his "swabber," ran from one end to the other of the guns, to see where this same "swabber" went in! He pulled off the apron, which he was pleased to call the "kivver;" it was not the right place, he said, because the hole there did not seem big enough: he then ran to the muzzle, took hold of the tompion, pulled, screwed and twitched, exclaiming, "What the devil do you put these stopples in here for?". My friend, replied, "Merely, sir, to prevent the guns going off in the night, and thereby giving false alarms and doing mischief."—The aid appeared astonished and let his "swabber" fall upon the platform. What kind of a report he made to the general, is not exactly known, but my friend is somewhat at a loss to conjecture how this man could *aid* his general! It is true, if the general had sufficient leisure on the field to write an order in full, such an aid might carry it, provided there were guide-boards placed at convenient distahees! But I beg pardon for this digression; my friend merely wished me to

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mention the affair, because the said aid is retained in service, that the country hereafter, may have the benefit of his great talents and experience.

The gentleman was a Tailor by trade: nor do I mention this as the least disparagement to him as an officer, because, as your excellency well knows, when it comes to the pinch, we have no class of people among us, who will (at an enemy,) make their needles, shears, bodkins, beeswax and cabbage fly, like the class above mentioned, if they only *once* get into battle. It is however, but justice to say, that the above aid really *forced* himself into the family of the general: which shews, may it please your excellency, not only the *danger*, but the consequences of flattery. And here my friend requests, that your excellency will lay down the letter, and think seriously four minutes upon the danger above mentioned.————Hath your excellency fairly considered the matter? Then I verily believe, that if your excellency hath reflected upon the affair rightly, you will agree with my friend in believing, that had your excellency well and truly considered these matters in the month of June, 1814, your excellency, with better AIDS, would not, in the August following, have had such an everlasting race from Bladensburgh! And, *perhaps* Washington might have been saved from ruin. It is not necessary to be prolix on this subject, nor does my friend wish either to be his own eulogist, or to commend himself: no, sir, he will leave those things in the hands of his former commanding officers to do, who if they could have had a voice in the selection of officers for the peace establishment, would have retained him.

But to make this matter short, my friend assigns one of three reasons, for his being left out of the peace establishment, and thrown a cripple upon the world; viz.

1st. He never was sufficiently *obsequious* to work himself into favour with those above him, whose practice was cringing and bowing, and who rose to preferment by flattery, or in other words, by saying one thing and meaning another.

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2ndly. His lameness, occasioned by a too faithful adherence to his professional duties, or

3dly, Because he did not tread exactly in the same steps which his grandmother trod before him.

With regard to the first reason; whatever your excellency may think, it is a fact, that *flattery* does in many cases, more for the advancement of men in a military or political point of view, than all the good qualities of virtue and genius put together. This ought not to be the case, but we see it in too many instances, for it is a fact, that some of our generals are as susceptible of flattery as other men, and are spoiled by it in the same manner as children are, who have been petted too much: in other words, like many other men in high stations, they have been surrounded by an obsequious, sycophantic set, who have fed their vanity by large potions of flattery, entirely too large for a modest man to swallow, and who have thereby accomplished two objects; the first is, to spoil the general's ear for hearing plain salutary truths; and, the second is, *their own* preferment. These are things of which my friend was never guilty; he was always ready, however, to give full and entire credit to the real fame of any soldier, of any grade. Nor did he choose to be fawning or cringing about great men, with many pretty sayings which were not true, merely for the purpose of wriggling himself into favour: he never waited upon them for any purpose, except on business, or to report himself. It was the same case with regard to the heads of departments at Washington City; he never attended the President's levee; nor had he ever the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Jefferson, who gave him his first commission, or your excellency who gave him his second. Here your excellency will perhaps ask what my friend was about all this time? I will tell your excellency in three words, he was "about his business." During his eight years service, he has never asked but one furlough; it was a short absence: the remainder of the time, when health would permit, he was perfecting himself and his men in the use of arms; and it is believed, that no troops were more alert, or more

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perfect in discipline, (particularly in that branch relating to artillery,) than were the troops under his charge: and so pure and strong was their attachment to him, that when they found their old commanding officer, who had been with them through the war, left out of the army, they came around him weeping like so many kind and faithful children, each one petitioning to be discharged the service, offering to give up their claims to the retained bounty of seventy-four dollars, and the 160 acres of land. The citizens of Annapolis were no less surprised, when they were informed that my friend was not retained! They came forward, and proposed in a body, to petition the President to reinstate him. Nor was this confined to any political sect, for, although my friend is, and ever was a republican, or "whig of the Green Mountains," yet the offer for petition was first made, by those who differed from him in political tenets, and was immediately followed by all.

He thanked them from his heart—for this kind offer reached it. It was an open declaration of their approbation of his conduct, during his command at that post, and strongly expressive of their wishes for his continuance; perhaps something of *compassion*, too, might have governed them in proposing to petition, for they saw him a cripple, moving about upon crutches, after eight years service, (though by the bye, he does not mean to insinuate that he did more than his duty,) himself and family far from their connexions, cut off instantly from support; and for aught they knew to the contrary, obliged to beg his way home, with what feelings, he leaves your excellency to judge; or, perhaps they saw him likely to become a town charge to those, in defending whom he had lost his health! I say whether any, or all of these considerations entered into their views or not, when they offered to petition your excellency, is needless to enquire, suffice it to say, that he felt grateful for the offer, but declined it, because he knew there was some pretended reason for getting rid of him at any rate! He says *pretended* reason, because there could not have been a *good* one, as he never had a military fault found with him

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during his whole service; nor is there an officer in or out of service, who can complain, that my friend was ever guilty of the slightest neglect of duty: he had not the honor of an acquaintance with any one of the officers who formed the board for selection: he had no representative there, nor did he make any interest to be retained, believing it to be a matter in course; but he has the authority of the Secretary of that board, to say, that by *them* he was retained: we must, therefore, look elsewhere, and to other causes for his dismissal!! I will slightly touch upon the second reason, viz. my friend's lameness.

In your excellency's instructions to the officers who formed the board for selection, they were directed not to retain any officer who from "age, wounds or *disabilities* of *any* kind, should be unable at that moment to take the field of action!!" One would suppose that these instructions might have had conclusive weight with the said board, were it not for the fact, that some *few* were retained who were *cripples*, and among the rest, *my friend*, if the secretary of the board is to be believed, and were it not also, for *one other* reason which will be considered hereafter.

There was undoubtedly an *object* in giving such an order to the board; nor will I put the worst construction upon your excellency's *motives* in giving this very extraordinary order; such as the getting rid of all officers of the above description, and sending them, after long and faithful services, beggars into the world; but, on the contrary, we will suppose it was for the purpose of having an army which could immediately take the field, believing that all those who could not, from any of the above causes, would and should certainly be provided for by Congress; this your excellency *recommended*, but it is one thing to recommend *publicly*, and another to *advise* the *contrary privately!* If, however, we can judge from the *neglect* and long *sufferings* of our revolutionary soldiers, in like cases, these poor cripples need not expect much from Congress. I know well, that it was not in your excellency's power to *pension* or *reward* those worthy fellows, inasmuch as your excellency had no money at your

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command for that purpose; nor am I certain your excellency would have done it if you had. I might here, say, too, with truth, that much blame attaches to congress for *hurrying* the reduction of the army in the *manner* they did; not seeming to care for any thing further than its *reduction*, nor appearing to consider what they were about!

But, as these observations will apply to *all* sufferers, and as I have only one particular case in view, I will proceed to the *third*, which my friend considers the *true reason*; of his being left out of the peace-establishment. viz: "that he did not tread *exactly* in the same steps which his grandmother trod before him!"

A short time after, the office of "superintendent general of military supplies" was created, the man holding that station issued a "circular," requiring officers, who were accountable for public property, at the different posts and garrisons in the United States, to make immediate report to him of said property. Accompanying this circular, was a thing called a "class book," which was intended to show the manner in which all articles should be placed, in the *form* of return. My friend did not receive the said class book until after he made out, and forwarded his return, after the *old form*; for it is proper to add here, that although my friend has acted either in the capacity of commanding officer, assistant military agent, adjutant, or assistant deputy quarter master general, at the several posts where he has been stationed, he never failed of having his quarterly accounts and vouchers, his monthly, and all other returns and reports, made out, and forwarded the *very day* on which the law required; which, with due deference, I believe, cannot be said of many other officers in the American service. However, his return, last made, was sent back to him, with the class book, and a request, that he would make a new *form* of return, agreeably to said book. Now, if your excellency hath never examined the said class book, it would be well worth your while so to do, the first leisure moment your excellency may have; for it is a matter of great curiosity, and is

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such a book, and such a form, as is believed, were never before published to the world in any language.

There are two grand reasons why my friend thinks that your excellency ought to stop here, lay down this letter, and proceed, forthwith, to the office of the "superintendent general," and there peruse that same, very notable, and extraordinary "class book."

The first reason is, it will be for your own good. And the second reason is, it will be for the good of the nation.

As to the first reason, my friend is well convinced, from the whole character of your excellency's life, that your excellency likes to know every thing relating to science; and it is really considered that, in a military point of view, this "class book" is likely to form an entire new era! The world, generally, supposes that the stupendous class book is the *sole* production of the superintendent general himself! but there are some few authorities to the contrary. In the first place, although my friend hath the most profound as well as the most elevated opinion of the superintendent's wisdom and capacity, yet, it is hardly possible to suppose that any *one* superintendent general could *alone* have been the father of such a prodigy! The matter is almost impossible, as it were. In the second place, there are several reports abroad which roundly assert that this great invention is a joint production of the superintendent and one of his under secretaries. Be that as it may, the superintendant claims the honor of it—and we say let him have it. As we have not leisure to investigate the title of the true inventor, it shall suffice us, at present, that the child is actually laid at the superintendent's door.

Besides your excellency's deriving just scientific knowledge, from a perusal of that same book, when you have conned it over thoroughly, and reflected on it carefully, you will there perceive, how wise, how inventive, how scientific, and how truly great are some of those men who hold high offices under and near your excellency's person. And it is really surprising, to see how quick a *high office* can give *greatness* to a man whom nature made and intended to be

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very small! Your excellency will see this when you read the class book. And this leads me to the consideration of the second reason.

My friend makes very little doubt, when your excellency shall discover that the whole *military world* has been shaken by the *genius* of one superintendent general, your excellency will, immediately, consider how important it is, in a national point of view, to beware of such geniuses. And you will easily see it is only because your excellency elevates them to high office, that their power to do harm is great; and by keeping them to the sphere for which they were by *nature* intended, their power to do mischief will be very limited. This will lead your excellency to be very careful how you exalt such men; because I am certain your excellency hath too much virtue and patriotism to be tempted, by any little, *selfish* interests, to promote any one beyond the rank which his merit may claim. And thus, will this affair of itself, by leading to some reformation in the great world, benefit the union beyond all calculation.

But to proceed; my friend went on, with great patience and good nature, and made out his return, agreeably to said book and form, with this addition, taking care to leave a space (blank) under each class, from A to Z, over and above the number of articles he had on hand, in each of which spaces he put some fictitious name; for instance, under class A, (after inserting all the articles he had in that class,) he put the word "aquemiravelus"—under class B, (after setting down as above,) he put "blue-lights," and so on through the rest of the alphabet. So that the superintendent had a true return of all articles on hand, with the addition of an article under each head, which he was pleased to say afterwards, in a note to my friend, that he "could not find as belonging to the catalogue of military supplies!!" This was as it should be—for, it is a fact that those articles, of which he complained, were no more to be found in any catalogue of military supplies, than were the like number of articles in the superintendent's class book! The said return, so far as it related to those fictitious names, being intended as a fair

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back-stroke at the class book; but it would appear that the superintendent took it as a *direct thrust* at himself. Thus, under class N, was put nippers and whatever else my friend had belonging to that class; and in one of the blank spaces, as above, was put the word "Nincompoop." Fatal word! It lost my friend his commission, and made a beggar of him in an instant!! Gracious heaven! how could that be? I will inform your excellency. The superintendent insisted upon it that the said term *nincompoop* was intended to apply to himself personally, and could not be persuaded to the contrary! He, therefore, went with great gravity and rage, to make his complaint to the secretary of war, general Armstrong. So with *Peter Hagner, Esq.* and some others, to witness the result, on the one hand, and with the return in the other, did he enter the secretary's office to lay the matter before him, and to demand satisfaction by my friend's arrest and trial!! The secretary looked at the return—saw nothing very objectionable in it; when the superintendent, putting himself in a violent passion, exclaimed, "do you not see, sir, the insult to me, couched under that cursed term 'nincompoop?' (putting his finger on the very place;) and does that term not apply to me?" said the superintendent in a still greater rage. And, without waiting for an answer, demanded my friend's arrest!! The secretary said he could not discover that the term was intended to be applied to any one; nor did he see any cause whatever for an arrest; but he could not help laughing very heartily at the superintendent, for the conceit which he had unfortunately got into his head. The superintendent departed in a rage, and determined, as is believed, to try other means to wreak his vengeance upon my friend. The reduction of the army offered a fair opportunity!!!

It is not my friend's intention to find fault with the selection of officers for the peace-establishment, although he hath good and sufficient grounds; for the board of officers, who made that selection, expressly state that the list is not, at all, like the one submitted by them to your excellency—

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that it was so altered and mutilated, as to appear almost a *new* selection! Shall we, for a moment, doubt the veracity of the board? Unquestionably it was looked upon as a matter of high responsibility by any one, or more, who should make the selection; hence a board of officers was appointed for that purpose—in order, as is believed, that your excellency might, seemingly, avoid responsibility! Mr. MONROE, as secretary of war, found it very convenient, just at that moment, to go to Virginia; probably, for the purpose of being able to say, thereafter, that he had no hand in the selection. And as he is to be the candidate for the next presidency, it was, perhaps, (he thinks) no bad move in him, *politically*. But to shrink from his duty as secretary of war, in such a case, did neither bespeak the soldier, nor the great man.

The secretary of the treasury, Mr. DALLAS, was, therefore, appointed to act as secretary of war in this convenient absence of Mr. MONROE, because, as he would act no longer than until Mr. MONROE's return, and as Mr. MONROE would return as soon as the peace establishment was fixed, Mr. DALLAS would return to his duties in the treasury; always having it in his power to say, that he acted as secretary of war with extreme reluctance—that he was unacquainted with the most essential duties of that office—and, in truth, that he was but a "fresh hand at the bellows," and, therefore, ought not to be blamed. He, at least, showed more courage than Mr. MONROE; the reason of which perhaps is, that he did not expect to be a candidate for the next presidency!!

Your excellency can, therefore, say with great safety, that the selection was made by a board of officers of high standing, appointed for that purpose—the list only to be submitted to your excellency and to the secretary of war for approval; and that, if any fault is found with the selection, it must rest upon the shoulders of that board. The board can say, as they have said, that the list as it came from the president and secretary of war, was materially different from the one submitted by them! Mr. MONROE can say

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that he was in Virginia about that time, and was very sorry he had nothing to do with the selection or approval; because if he had, the list would have been quite different; so that his neck is out of the noose. And Mr. DALLAS will probably say, that he does not care three coppers about the matter; for as he is a very eminent lawyer, he undoubtedly, with a good fee, would as soon take the worst as the best side of the question. So that your excellency will perceive that, in this case, *responsibility* rests with nobody! which reminds me of a little poem I have seen somewhere, (and which I dare say your excellency will recollect,) written about "nobody." However, the cream of the said poem was this: there were all sorts of mischief done in the neighborhood, and it was always "nobody" who did it—but, to crown all, the Belle of the village was, somehow or other, most unexpectedly and most miraculously got with child, and it was by her affirmed that *nobody* did it!! However, my friend takes his to be a much plainer case. Shall he be compelled to say it! and shall he be obliged, after thinking so highly of your excellency's virtue and talents, as a statesman, for so many years, to alter that opinion by believing that your excellency hath acted unworthily of the chief magistrate of these states? and in a case, too, which was totally beneath a moment's serious notice from your excellency. A case which if noticed at all, should have been only for the purpose of inducing your excellency to look into the "class book," and to advise your brother-in-law to revise and correct it; so that it might have come out highly embellished, by the next campaign: for, as it now is, your excellency will perceive it is full of nothing but *Cutts*, and, like all little picture books, is an excellent thing to amuse children—but certainly fit for nothing else. Ask the opinion of any military man concerning the class book, and your excellency may not be at a loss, without even looking at it. The truth is, the superintendent not being a military man, did not know how to arrange the articles, nor how to make out a decent *form* of return; and what is worse than all, he did not know what articles came within the catalogue of military supplies!

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He could keep accounts, however, and like a tolerable merchant, as he is, made out a *form*, and arranged his articles, much as a merchant would make out his invoices; including many articles which are not supplied to any troops, but such as he, perhaps, had been accustomed to peddle out from behind the counter. And here I could relate to your excellency a very nice, clever, little anecdote, which took place between the superintendent general and my friend, on the subject of accountability for public property—it would do your excellency's heart and soul good to hear it: but as my friend thinks it might take up too much of your excellency's precious time to read it; and as it is rather foreign to the purpose of this note, he will only consent to my mentioning one fact concerning it, as follows:

The superintendent was exceedingly particular in having every article accounted for, with every thing issued, lost or received between the return of one quarter and the next—this was right. But it so happened, that in my friend's return of (say) the quarter ending the 31st March 1814, there were two 6pr. sponges left out, which were included in the return the quarter previous,—and my friend received a long letter from the superintendent, requesting that an exact and true account be given of the two sponges. He therefore stated in reply, what was the fact, that the mice had got into the shed where were placed all his spare sponges; and wanting, as is believed, a little wool with which to make them a nice snug winter birth, and not entirely liking the station where the sponges lay, had consulted their own feelings and convenience by very cleverly biting off what they wanted of the wool, and carrying it where they thought proper to make their beds.

Now I am confident that your excellency will agree with my friend in saying, that these little animals had not the least intention, by taking the wool, to disturb the mind of the superintendent general! No, sir, I verily believe they would have frozen to death first!! Here my friend begs that your excellency would lay down this letter, take off your spectacles, and reflect seriously and solemnly, for fourteen

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minutes, upon the forlorn and almost hopeless condition of these same mice! Dreary winter had set in—the ground was covered with snow—there was nothing to be found out of doors where-withal to make them a snug warm nest! Consider too, may it please your excellency, that *Mrs. Mouse* might, and probably had, at that moment, a score or two of little ones, for which she felt all the affection and tenderness of a mother—perhaps too, she was not able with the warmth of her own body to keep them from freezing, and was therefore compelled to leave them and go forth in quest of warmer covering! Consider too, that *Mrs. Mouse* had sent out all her sweet-hearts upon the same *fatherly* errand—that they had long overstayed their time, and that she herself had been compelled to leave her little ones, naked and unprotected, in that inclement season, to hasten their return with something for the family!! I think I see the tears trickling down your excellency's noble cheeks, whilst your excellency is viewing this little family group at the north-west corner of said shed, the snow whistling about their ears, they not daring to enter, because they saw the superintendent general watching them, with stern eye and contracted brow, exclaiming to them, in a voice like thunder, "begone miscreants! ye base-born, vile animals, begone! or I'll knock every tooth out of your heads"!! It was most cruel—and had they not come that very night and taken the wool from the two sponges, my friend declared his intention to have bought every one of them a *merino nest*—for "mice want wool, and must have it."

In order therefore to account exactly for the two sponges, my friend was under the necessity of telling the affair circumstantially, just as it happened—and he added, that he had then covered the two sponges with new skin, and had put on a composition which, it was believed would prevent a like occurrence in future; and he did furthermore add, this threat to the mice; that if they dared to touch another lock of wool from any of the sponges, the commanding officer was instructed to order out his whole detachment, with 500 rounds of pidgeon-shot cartridge, when every devil of

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them should be blown up, unless they should surrender at discretion! But if they did so surrender, they should be kindly treated, and sent off without any other punishment, except the loss of their teeth; assuring them that to pull their little teeth, would not hurt much, as our surgeon was an excellent one, and would extract them with all the tender feelings imaginable. After hearing the above threat, and knowing that the superintendent general was at the bottom of it, the mice bowed down their heads, and retired with heavy squeaks, and with tears in their eyes!!

But to come more directly to the conclusion; it has been shewn that neither the first nor second reasons operated *with the board*, to neglect my friend, for it does appear that they did do him justice in every possible respect, (except one;) but as it is not known who is in fault, in that particular, (because the selection was made by *every body*, and by *nobody*,) my friend knows not exactly who ought to father that injustice. The exception he has reference to, is that of *transferring*, (either from favoritism, or any other cause) officers from other corps, (who have been but a short time in service, and who have not particularly distinguished themselves,) to the corps of artillerists; and this too, over the heads of officers of the last mentioned corps, who have been in service many years longer, who were regularly educated at the military-school, and who certainly ought on no principle to have been thus insulted! It is stabbing to the heart, that *military pride*, which every *good officer* will necessarily feel, and making him a mere tool, to be kicked about at pleasure, to be thrust into the lowest seat, in order to make room for some obsequious, sycophantic favorite. This act of *transferring*, with others which naturally follow, are the reasons why my friend hath said that he would not serve under the present organization of the army. This is another digression; but my friend could not suffer me to pass over in silence, this subject of *transfers*, it being so nearly and dearly connected, with the honor, rights and privileges of many of the best officers in the army.

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But to the *true* reason of the beggarly condition of my friend:

Your excellency will perceive that as the two first mentioned reasons had no weight, the *third* and last must have been the *real* one—thus:

The superintendent general, not being successful with the secretary of war, in his complaint, is believed to have run, (like a whining school-boy, who fancied somebody had been plaguing him) directly to "tell master of it;" in other words, to lay the matter before your excellency. Whether the superintendent general laid before your excellency, the return, or whether he found himself caught upon a wrong scent and therefore told his own tale in his own way, is rather uncertain—but out of charity for the good sense and understanding of your excellency, my friend would presume the latter—for had your excellency seen the return, you would have had nothing to do in the case, but whisper in the superintendent's ear, and tell him to hush the matter up and say no more about it.—And yet if your excellency hath not seen the return, my friend considers that he is condemned without a hearing! O! ye gods, goddesses, little fishes and all!! How shall I record the fact, that because the brother-in-law of the president of the United States, had *fancied* he was called a "nincompoop," by an officer of the army, the president himself should dismiss that officer, without knowing whether he did, or did not call the superintendent such an *uncourtly* name!!! The proceeding was totally unmilitary! It was, however, of a piece with that *greatness and courage* which your excellency displayed in the prodigiously sweating race, your excellency had from Bladensburgh.——But my friend hereby declares (thro' me) upon the honor of an honest man and a soldier, that he never did apply the epithet "nincompoop" to your excellency's brother-in-law, until your excellency's brother-in-law had assumed the title himself,—and, whether the superintendent general has really mistaken his own character, or not, by assuming that appellation, can be ascertained by all those who will read the class-book, together with my

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friend's return, which did really and truly contain the word "nincompoop." The true definition of which word, agreeably to NOAH WEBSTER, JUN. Esq. is "a blockhead, simpleton, fool;" and is, also, thus defined by the author of the new, critical pronouncing dictionary of the English language, viz:—"nincompoop—*nin'kum-poop*, s. (corruption of the Latin, non-compos) a fool, a trifler. So that if the superintendent general will insist upon wearing that title, my friend will by no means endeavor to prevent his being thought worthy of it.

But how shall my friend find words to express his astonishment, at the part your excellency must have chosen to act in this affair? By all the powers above, and below too, if your excellency could but enter the room this moment, and see my friend, sitting upon a three-legged stool, without fire, screwing and puckering up his ~~face into~~ all manner of shapes, merely because he is obliged to think so unworthily of your excellency's conduct in this affair, it would be, at least, enough to make your excellency ask, "what is the matter?" The answer to which question would lead him back to all that has been here said; for, most assuredly, he does neither intend or wish to call your excellency improper names; it would by no means become him, either as a citizen or a soldier. But, with all the attendant circumstances, he would simply request, that your excellency would, for once, look at this matter exactly as an honest, upright, up-to-the-hub-man, should view any matter with which he has any concern; and the more especially, any matter over which such a man hath entire control: that is, put my worthy friend in your place, with five and twenty-thousand dollars a year—surrounded with open mouths, which are gaping for loaves and fishes, (patronage)—swallowing enormous quantities of flattery for breakfast, dinner, supper and luncheon: then fix yourself, a *cripple*, upon my friend's three-legged stool—surrounded with your family of little ones, crying for bread, and none to give them—without a fire, or means to provide any—with a thread-bare undress uniform coat, and nothing with which to procure a better one: in

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truth, totally dependent upon the charity of your neighbors! and after sitting in such condition, a year upon the said stool, be plain enough to ask, *why* you were placed there? And when the answer is, *"because the president's brother-in-law imagined himself a* NINCOMPOOP, *the president himself got in a passion, and sent one of his most faithful officers, a cripple and a beggar into the world!! an officer, who had served him, most truly with his sword and his pen, for the last fifteen years!!!"* I say, I will leave it with your excellency, in such a case, to apply the most suitable epithet to the PRESIDENT who could unman himself for so trifling a cause.

Wishing that your excellency would give this matter a few moments' serious consideration, for your own sake—for the honor of the army, and the interests of officers—for the sake of justice, and the sake of mercy—and sincerely and truly wishing that your excellency may never again fall into such unpleasant errors as I have, in the foregoing pages, delicately hinted at. And, more especially, wishing your excellency to be very careful to correct that dangerous class book, which is the laughing stock of all sensible military men, and a source of immense inconvenience to the whole army, I conclude this, my short friendly epistle, (in the old way) by tendering to your excellency the assurances of my own, and my friend's estimation of

your superior worth,

WILLIAM HENRY MIDDLETON.

NEW-YORK CITY.

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Postscript.

Since writing the above, it appears that we are to have a war with Spain—*that is England*; and that Mr. MONROE is to be our next president. I ask your excellency, under these circumstances, if it would not be well to take a little care of the army and navy? Tell-tale superintendents—transfers—reductions—mortifying humiliations, and such like bad management, may make up such a national force as will rather help to bring national disaster than acquire national glory! And, after all, an upright commander in chief, who scorns to shuffle—who shrinks from no duty—who is brave in the field, and magnanimous in council, is quite as likely to save our liberties as one who pursues a contrary course. It is true Mr. MONROE has never been *distinguished* in service, except at Bladensburgh; and he did, indeed, shuffle the duty of *selection* on to Mr. DALLAS, by his leaving Columbia! But, he *may* do better when he is elected president. I shall have my eye on him. I shall not be an *idle* gazer on my country's ruin. And my much injured friend, whose writings I have just been reading, assures me that if you have taken away his sword, his pen is still his own. He is at this moment writing a very minute and interesting history of several great men, and he seems determined to make the welkin ring with the wrongs of the army. Wo be to the authors of those wrongs! When brave men are insult-

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ed, they will, *like brave men*, have redress. The world shall not rest *till these wrongs are righted*. If the "*high* CONTRACTING *powers*" at Washington, hope to bring into vogue the bastard principles of Castlereagh, it may be well to remind them, that we stir the fire of the nation here, with such *pokers* as they cannot use in Europe. THE PEOPLE "TEACH GREAT MORAL LESSONS" HERE.

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